

# SOCIALIST REVIEW

Cost \$3, Solidarity \$5



**HORRIBLE HISTORY!  
NATIONAL PARTY'S  
TWISTED ROOTS**

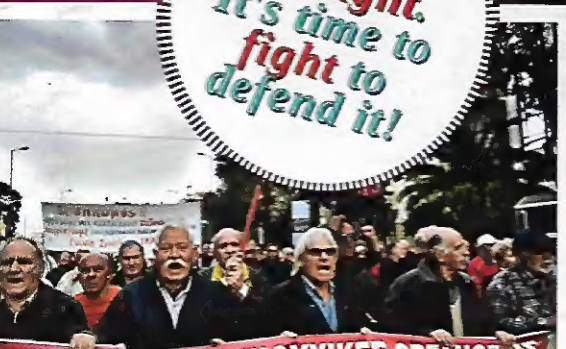


**ANZACS  
BACK  
KARZAI  
REGIME**



**Beautiful Kiribati  
CONDEMNED BY  
CLIMATE  
CHAOS**

*Retirement  
is a **right**.  
It's time to  
**fight** to  
defend it!*

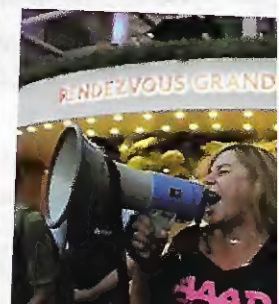


## ROTTEN, RICH & CORRUPT

*Time for the National  
Government to go!*

**INEQUALITY**  
*Facts and figures  
reveal ugly reality*

**WHAT'S THE  
POINT OF  
PROTESTING?**





# Where We Stand

The International Socialist Organisation is a group of revolutionaries that are part of Te Mana movement. We are active in campaigns, protests, on campuses, and in the union movement.

## Socialism

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit not human need. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

## Workers' Power

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want. Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of other classes and fighting for real workers' power – a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils. China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

## Liberation From Oppression

We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to all forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence. All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

## Revolution Not Reformism

Despite the claims of the Labour Party and trade union leaders, the structures of the present parliament, army, police, and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers. There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

## Internationalism

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

## Tino Rangatiratanga

We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga. Maori capitalists and corporate Iwi leaders have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Maori. The



government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Maori elite while doing little for working class Maori. Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

## Environment

Exploitation of nature is as central to capitalism as exploitation of labour. Capitalism everywhere drains the earth of its resources for the profit of the few, devastating the environment and the lives of ordinary people in the process. Climate change is transforming the earth and threatening life as we know it. To stop it, humanity must re-organise its relation to the earth. The fight for socialism, led by the working class, is at the same time a fight to create a world where human beings live sustainably with the environment.

## Revolutionary Organisation

To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day-to-day activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.

## Join the International Socialist Organisation

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ISSN 1175-2629





# Corruption is nothing new

"Crusher" Collins, who won her nickname confiscating and crushing the cars of "boy racers", has been crushed for corruption. Labour say Collins has been using her position to benefit her husband's employer, Oravida, which imports milk into China. We would be shocked if she weren't, writes Andrew Tait.

Corruption is part and parcel of the way capitalism works but in the last month Labour has been hammering National for conflicts of interest. Government MPs say things are now in danger of getting out of control.

"I think it's bordering on that," says Gerry Brownlee, Leader of the House. "I mean I think we could all get into sort of tit-for-tat discussions about who attended what for fundraising purposes. That's easily done. The reality is that New Zealand politicians are not corrupt."

Anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International agrees, consistently ranking New Zealand as one of the least corrupt countries in the world.

Their website has a handy map of the world, with New Zealand, Denmark and Finland shining in angelic yellow, while Africa, especially Somalia, and the Middle East (Afghanistan and Iraq) are dyed with the darkest red of shame.

According to Transparency International, Venezuela – where there has been an enormous transfer of wealth from an oligarchic elite to the working class and the poor – is also deeply corrupt.

It really makes you wonder whether "corrupt" isn't just a codeword for coloured, or maybe communist. Collins is quite clearly neither of these, as even Gerry Brownlee can see, so it's baffling to him why anyone would consider her actions questionable.

Sure, we don't have to bribe the cop to avoid arrest – New Zealand's corruption is in plain sight. Only a rotten, putrid political establishment (aided and abetted by the owners of the media)



**Straight up: In a Parliament of Rogues, Mana are the only party working people can trust.**

would consider the racist mass incarceration of Maori and Pacific Islanders anything but thoroughly corrupt.

The sell-off of our assets in the last three decades, which has massively enriched a small coterie of financiers is not corruption – it took place in plain sight. That the vultures who executed this disembowelling of public property flew off to well-paid perches in the private sector is just the market at work, not corruption.

When finance company directors, like the leeches of Lombard, are let off lightly after ruining people's lives, this has nothing to do with Supreme Court Judges sending their kids to the same fancy schools or belonging to the same polo club.

This is the arrogance of the born-to-rule, private-school, silver-spoon-sucking scum who have floated to the top. Unfortunately it's not as though Labour are any better. They have had no campaign to speak of – although David

Parker just came out swinging: attacking the Nats for not slashing the superannuation bill. Labour want working people to retire later for the sake of "the economy" – which is just code for the capitalist elite. This is a massive theft of years of our lives – especially manual workers and Maori who are far more likely to die younger. And Cunliffe is pretty corrupt too, by a socialist definition. He attacked Key for living in a \$10 million house, when his cost \$2.5 million!

"We bought the worst house in the best street," says Mr Cunliffe. "It was a do-up; it probably wouldn't be the average of the area."

"Mr Key spent time in the money markets and has a personal fortune, which is many times our reasonably middle-range existence."

What an idiot!

The only MP with any integrity is Hone Harawira and the only party worth voting for is Mana.



# Labour wants to steal your retirement



Pensioners rally in Athens against plans to raise the retirement age to 68. Labour want to do the same.

On May 1 in Australia, a “Commission of Audit” announced plans to sentence all working people to another five years, to raise the retirement age to from 65 to 70. Australian Labor Party (ALP) leader Bill Shorten described the Commission’s report as “written by big business, for big business.” The New Zealand Labour Party thinks it is a good idea, Dougal McNeill writes.

Another cruel and unusual punishment suggested by the Commission is to link the family home to asset-testing for pension eligibility. In one fell swoop, the state would steal the family home and five more years of your life.

This proposal – along with Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s cuts to health and education – are an open attack on Australia’s working class and trade unions. Treasurer Joe Hockey said it: “This budget will be a call to arms for the Australian people. If you have the capacity to work, we don’t just want you to work, we need you to work.” That ‘call to arms’ is a threat – the Liberals are going after working conditions.

But in NZ, Labour Party Finance spokesman David Parker attacked the government from the right. He called National the “tax-and-spend” party, and boasted Labour would “run fiscal surpluses”. David Cunliffe and Parker

have both called for the retirement age to be raised to 67. ACT is the only other party to push this anti-worker policy.

As if that weren’t enough, Labour wants to push more of the cost of pensions on to workers; their “Economic Upgrade” plan, announced in April, would make Kiwisaver compulsory. That would push down our spending power. Labour want to cut the pension then tax us to pay for a compulsory but private (and unguaranteed) scheme.

David Parker says superannuation is a looming crisis that will bankrupt the country. He says National has its “head in the sand” and accuses it of populism for refusing to raise the pension age. But this is a manufactured crisis.

The population is ageing, in NZ and globally; by 2050 some 22% of the world’s 9 billion people will be over 60 years old. What pensions researcher

Robin Blackburn calls the “frail and vulnerable ‘old’ old” are the most rapidly growing age cohort everywhere.

In the coming decades, societies will need to increase care for older people and yet, funding has been cut to health and aged care services. An ageing population requires social change – just as decreased infant mortality did last century, or working class participation in education.

There will be a crisis if the pension age remains the same only if everything else stays the same: low taxes for business, no living wage, and so on. But government budgets are not like household budgets, no matter how many times the system’s apologists make this comparison: a government’s debts involve plans around the future, and future sources of income, quite different from a personal household’s limited choices.

Labour’s plans for the pensions will not



affect everyone equally. There is a 7.3 year gap in life expectancy between Maori and non-Maori – in the mid-90s it was 9.1 years. Life expectancy at birth, according to Statistics New Zealand, is 83.0 years for females and 79.3 years for males.

For Maori men, however, it is 72.8 years. For Maori men, then, for Maori and Pakeha manual workers, an increase in the age of eligibility from 65 to 67 cuts into the years they can expect to enjoy retirement far more.

Shearers, forestry workers, retail workers, aged care staff, meat workers and others are often more worn out by 65, and more likely to have injuries or health conditions brought on by their working life. Labour wants to take more again from these workers, from people whose very bodies have been disfigured by the labour they have provided and the wealth they have created.

Workers in white-collar jobs may not wish to retire at 65 and nor should they be forced to do so: we are against age discrimination. But selective media stories about people enjoying work past 65 obscure and personalise the collective question. It is one thing for people to be able to choose and another to force them.

“The universal, publicly financed old-age pension has been a popular and effective means for reducing poverty and extending social citizenship in all developed states,” Robin Blackburn argues. Privately-run schemes, such as KiwiSaver, are fraught with all the instability of the capitalist system.

In the years since the Global Financial Crisis, Blackburn’s research shows, “pensioners are being hit from every side. In 2008, global retirement funds dropped by 20 per cent in one week. In the US, a recent survey found that 67 per cent of adults aged 45-54 had less than \$50,000

of savings, sufficient to buy an annuity of just \$300 a month; this was up from 55 per cent in 2007. After more than half a century of lavishing tax incentives on private pension schemes . . . it is still Social Security entitlement, averaging \$1,100 a month, which saves nearly half the US elderly population from destitution.”

And he that hath, to him shall be given: Professor John Gibson, of Waikato University, studied KiwiSaver in its early years. His findings show the scheme disproportionately benefits the already wealthy. In 2009 more than 45% of the working-age population earned below \$30,000 – they will get just 15 per cent of KiwiSaver tax incentives.

The 11% who earn more than \$70 000 will get 18% of incentives. And he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath: KiwiSaver and similar privatised retirement schemes reflect and reinforce existing inequalities in society.

Beneficiaries and the working poor, who do not earn enough to save, do not benefit, and then can be depicted as ‘feckless’ for failing to prepare for old age. Some 40% of all children in poverty in New Zealand – an estimated 270,000 – live in houses where there is at least one adult in full-time work. What sort of a future will those adults have come retirement?

Women, whose earning lives are disrupted by childbearing and patterns of part-time work, are similarly disadvantaged.

But the mythology of superannuation

encourages us to ignore these facts. Most dangerous of all is the way Labour’s proposal seeks to alter the social imaginary.

It is an attempted to confiscate our imagined future as much as anything else. Labour wants to make superannuation part of a “post-political” order. Cunliffe is promoting “cross-party accord” for “long-term stability”. But politics – the chance to contest social questions, to struggle over them – is what is needed.

What hopes do we have for old age? This is not just a matter of saving. The rich

will always be better placed to save. But it’s a dangerous nonsense. Care for the elderly, like care for the young, is social. None of us, no matter how carefully we saved 2% or 4% or 8% of our fortnightly pay, could come anywhere near paying for the costs of healthcare, housing, support and protection a normal life requires. These are social costs and cannot be calculated in personal terms.

Na to rourou, na taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi. With your food basket and my food

***Na to rourou, na taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi. With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive. Social challenges require collective solutions, sharing, planning. The treatment of its weakest members is the test of any society’s claims to civilisation.***

basket the people will thrive. Social challenges require collective solutions, sharing, planning. The treatment of its weakest members is the test of any society’s claims to civilisation.

Because they cannot produce any longer – because they are not able to be exploited – capitalism does not value the elderly. The workers’ movement has won pension rights and they are not ours now to give away. We owe them to the future, and to the labourers of today already being ground down by this system. Labour wants to take these years – and the commitment they represent – from those who labour. That is their disgrace.



# Horrible history of the National Party

If you're reading this magazine, then you likely know that the National Party are scumbags. You barely need to switch on the news to hear about some new cruelty that Paula Bennet has thought up for beneficiaries, or another statement of contempt for anyone who isn't a millionaire from John Key. The aim of this article is not to rehash what we already know, but to look at their horrible history, says Jim Gluck.

It's not just since John Key (or Brash, or Shipley or Muldoon) that the Nats have been cruel or contemptuous. The National Party have been imperious, ruling-class reptiles since their inception. In the first fifty years of existence, the National Party sent as 'representatives', its MPs, 30 lawyers, 16 army officers, 15 accountants and stockbrokers, and 71 farmers.

Thirty of them were educated in the most expensive private schools, 15 held high positions in religious organisations, and 58 of them received some form of title or knighthood. After parliament, 14 were sent to cushy jobs as ambassadors, high commissioners and diplomats, and 13 left parliament solely to take a place at the head of business. Only four, out of more than 150, were workers when they went into parliament. This is a picture of the ruling class, the owners of capital and influence in Aotearoa taking their turn at the wheel, dedicated from the start to keep the working class in their place.

### The fossil record

The precursors to the National Party – the business-based Liberal Party and the



*Rob Muldoon was a dedicated Cold War warrior for the USA. Here he receives orders from Ronald Reagan's Chief of Staff.*

farming-focused Reform Party – had been at each other's throats for decades before World War 1. With no representation for workers, parliament was a scuffle inside the ruling class to benefit their mates.

When World War 1 broke, the two formed a "National Government" to ensure nothing would interrupt conscription, which was bitterly opposed by the working class activists, or the mechanized slaughter of over 17,000 soldiers.

Afterwards, many on the Right urged the two to remain unified to prevent the new Labour Party from getting a toehold. Fortunately, Joseph Ward, of the Liberals, and Massey, of Reform, hated each other. The Liberal Party broke off and tried to woo workers with more radical policies. When this didn't work, and the Liberals lost their leader and deputy leader, the conservative Reform swept to power, and Labour got their toehold.

In 1928, the Liberal Party renamed itself

the United Party (reuniting with "the National Party", who were had split from the Liberals earlier). It entered an agreement with Labour to form a minority government. They did not do well. Confronted by the Great Depression, the party's business-as-usual policies harmed working people without helping business. After Ward died (in 1930), Gordon Coates, of Reform, and George Forbes, of the United Party, formed a coalition government to exclude Labour, and in the next election, prevented any other anti-Labour candidates from standing, to make every contest one between United and Labour. This lasted for about a year and a-half before a group of business owners seceded to form the New Zealand Legion, a radical conservative movement that called for greater morality in politics. Poor farmers started to move to Labour via the Social Credit movement. What these years saw, in short, was a confusing mess of right-wing rich people

**Continued: Page 9**



# Inequality: A New Zealand crisis

The title of this book is a compelling challenge of one of the greatest myths of New Zealand capitalism; that "true" poverty and inequality only exists overseas. It is an honest, clear and readable record of severe and worsening inequality - and the political corruption in NZ.

Reviewed by Gayaal Iddamalгода.

The book is divided into 17 essays by academics offering up-to-date assessments of the different causes and effects of inequality in New Zealand. Punctuated between the chapters is a series of 'viewpoints' collected by editor and contributor Max Rashbrooke, based on interviews with various people from various walks of life.

The most valuable resource in this book is the evidence it presents to illustrate New Zealand's crisis of inequality.

The early chapters, particularly the two written by Max Rashbrooke, illustrate inequality with a rich array of empirical data. In chapter 1, Rashbrooke plainly outlines his thesis based on OECD statistics: New Zealand now has the widest income gaps since detailed records began in the early 1980s; from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s, the gap between rich and the rest has widened faster in New Zealand than in any other developed country; the average household in the top 10% of New Zealand has nine times the income of one in the bottom 10%; The top 1% of adults own 16% of the country's total wealth, while the bottom 50% have just over 5%.

In chapter 2, Rashbrooke explains that while 10% of the population own over half the wealth, for the lower 50% "the picture is not of wealth but of debt: the 200,000 poorest (in wealth terms) owe a combined \$4.7 billion. No one in the poorest fifth of New Zealand owns more than \$6000 in assets".

This raw data is backed by clear lists of source material and extensively referenced. The information provides excellent weapons for political argument.

Rashbrooke makes it clear from the

## INEQUALITY A NEW ZEALAND CRISIS INEQUALITY

Max Rashbrooke | Robert Wade | Ganesh Nana  
Jonathan Boston | Karle Mills | Philippa Howden-Chapman  
INEQUALITY

Sarah Bierre | Chris Cunningham | Kim Workman  
Tracey McIntosh | Cathy Wylie | Evan Te Aho Poata-Smith  
INEQUALITY

Paul Barber | Paul Dalziel | Nigel Haworth  
Mike O'Brien | Linda Tahiwa Smith  
INEQUALITY  
A NEW ZEALAND CRISIS  
INEQUALITY

*New Zealand now has the widest income gaps since records began in the 1980s; the gap between rich and the rest has widened faster here than in any other developed country; the average household in the top 10% has nine times the income of one in the bottom 10%; The top 1% of adults own 16% of the country's total wealth, while the bottom 50% have just over 5%.*

outset that the inequality measured is limited to disparities in income and wealth. This measure is as an indicator of a social, economic and political system that sharpens the distinction between the wealthy few and the rest of society.

This growing inequality is no accident, Inequality shows: aggressive neoliberal

policies designed expressly to benefit the wealthy at the expense of everyone else are to blame. As society becomes increasingly run for the benefits of the wealthy few and as the gulf between them and 'ordinary New Zealanders' becomes more stark, so too does the sense of victimisation and alienation felt by working people and the poor.

Another commendable feature of the book is a frontal challenge to those who make the insipid argument that New Zealanders should be grateful that we don't live in a 'third world' country.

While it is true that we don't see the kind of inequality that exists in 'third world' slums, the extent of the gulf between rich and poor defines New Zealand as a country for the rich, where everyone else is increasingly excluded from the country's wealth.

The marginalising effect of inequality on women and minorities is illustrated with empirical evidence. Poverty in New Zealand disproportionately impact groups that are traditionally affected by the sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination that go hand in hand with capitalism. However; the book lacks a coherent theory of why inequality has these effects and fails to effectively demonstrate how these forms of oppression are inherent and systemic to capitalism.

An exception to this failure is found in Evan Poata Smith's analysis of Maori inequality. Colonisation, he argues, by destroying Maori society; stealing land and resources and forcing tangata whenua into the labour market on unequal terms, has been fundamental to the establishment and ongoing existence of New Zealand capitalism.

**Continued: Page 9**



# 2,4,6,8 why do we demonstrate?

Despite the outrageous statistics of one-in-four children or one-in-two elderly living in poverty, National continues to be popular in the polls. So what's the point of protesting? Rowan McArthur explains.



Heading out onto the streets with placard and megaphone in hand to protest doesn't always come naturally to people. In fact it can be an almost scary experience. Isn't it so much easier to just write about the issue on Facebook, wouldn't we reach more people by emailing the thousands on their computers a petition. 'Change is just a click away' 'click the capitalists out! As socialists a really important aspect of protesting even the smallest events is being able to put our theory and words into action. Now this article is not suggesting that by only joining in protests we can uproot this abhorrent system but it is one of the many areas which we must be active in to create a fairer and more equal society. This cannot be achieved at home on the internet!

Protests, no matter how small, are an important way of representing an issue, taking the abstract debates and making them a physical reality. Debates which can seem irrelevant to all but those directly affected by them suddenly become real to people on the streets when directly confronted by a group of placard holding, chant yelling activists. As socialists we have put ourselves out

there to represent an issue we feel strongly about and this is hard to ignore. Most protests do not convince people directly there and then but they do invite that dialogue, they invite that change.

By joining in protests not only are we physically on the streets standing up for an issue which we believe in, we are also engaging with the wider public on this issue, educating, debating and defending our points inside and outside of the movement. Inside the protest movement there are always a lot of different ideas and contradictory thought. All too often racist, sexist, homophobic and nationalistic ideas come out at protests and it is our job to make sure these arguments and rhetoric have opposition and ideally shut down. Because it's through these debates with people out on the streets that gives the space to change the ideas of the people involved in the protest, and society too. In big numbers protests demonstrate power. When thousands in Aotearoa took to the streets to protest mining or marched against the Iraq war it was a demonstration of collective power. The experience of coming together with others who feel the same way can be

incredibly inspiring. From the great Civil Rights movement in the US or Marriage Equality closer to home, protests have achieved huge change in society. It can also be a powerful show of solidarity. When Nelson Mandela was locked up in Robben Island and heard that the Hamilton game had been shut down by anti-apartheid protestors, he commented that it was "as if the sun had come out". Apartheid South Africa took decades of protests to fall but fall it did. Although not always successful in achieving our demands protests remind the ruling class that they cannot get away with everything, that there is opposition. This public display of opposition is even more important in the lead up to an election. We need to pressure all the parties from the left but we also need to be at protests to be arguing with people that, no matter who wins, there needs to be a strong movement on the streets. There were years of small protests against sporting contacts with South Africa before the massive 1981 protests. But 1981 wouldn't have happened without all those other years. That's why we're out on the streets now, whatever happens come September.



# Inequality: A New Zealand crisis cont.

Yet, the book's general failure to trace the oppression of minorities, indigenous peoples and women back to the working of capitalism itself means these oppressions are shown as mere symptoms of inequality and not as mechanisms that are essential to the profits, and the very existence, of capitalism. Ultimately, the book advocates 'benign' form of capitalism. Socialist solutions or Marxist economics are not considered.

In the final section of the book, where the question of what can be done to combat inequality is dealt with, contributors essentially argue that ordinary people should have increased social and political rights within the

capitalist system. The book's solution to the present crisis of inequality is to seek increased reforms; in such areas as social welfare, health care and schooling.

The subtext is that inequality should be fought by an appeal to the ruling class. This is illustrated in some of Rashbrooke's 'viewpoints'; one interviewee is the director of a successful company who chooses to pay himself less than the average company executive.

Ultimately therefore, the book can be criticised for presenting an academic appeal to those privileged individuals who benefit from the system in the hope these people will see the error of their

ways. It ignores the fact that these people are the ones who created the system that exists today and, that they continue to attack the working class in order to maintain it.

The book's purpose is not to empower the oppressed mass of society to struggle to claim their rights and should be criticised on that basis.

However as already discussed it presents an excellent repository of factual information and some timely observations about the growing impact that inequality is having on New Zealand society. For these reasons, it should be widely read on the left.

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# Horrible history of the National Party cont.

bickering over power and frantically panicking about the inevitable Labour victory. Which happened in 1935.

## After Labour

After failing to prevent the working class from finally gaining a real chance at power, the Reform and Liberal-United parties settled down to try and work out a way of working together. Just kidding: Coates blamed Forbes, and vice versa, but eventually the pair were forced to sit down. A conference held in 1936, permanently fused all the anti-Labour elements. Unsurprisingly, Coates wanted to call it the Unionist Party not National (thankfully nobody suggested the Liberal-United-National-Unionist party.) After settling the vastly important issue of the name, the conference settled down to try and create a constitution for the New Zealand National Party. Despite everyone being there to be anti-Labour, and the opening speech of the conference being primarily an attack on Labour's Communism, the conference refused actually to state an opposition to socialism in the constitution, instead

opting for the more vague 'Humanitarian reform', and pro-Commonwealth rhetoric.

The organization of the party is worth noting. Labour had managed to build a mass party of thousands of workers, so the nascent Nats decided they needed a big party too. In a fashion, they did manage to build a large party. At times in the party's history, a full third of their vote has come from paid-up members. However, the way they ran the party was designed to prevent the average person from having any effect on policy. In the past, Reform and Liberal branches were run as clubs for rich MPs. In the new system, branches were wholly independent of MPs . . . and MPs were wholly independent of branches. As E. E. Hammond put it: "When the candidates win, we say "Goodbye" to them at the gates of Parliament". The job of a National Party member was to get more Nats into parliament. Coates and Forbes took different paths after the union. Coates became bitter and insular, emerging only to make snide comments about how the National

Party had failed, and how Reform should have tried to take over. Forbes decided he was the best person to lead the new party, despite everybody telling him that nobody wanted him. He was, in his own words, willing to resign when "Moses Should Arise" – in other words at the end of the world. When it came to the pinch, however, bitterness beat Moses. Coates and six other National MPs threatened to leave and reform Reform if the caucus did not select Adam Hamilton as the leader. He won by one vote.

So a political party was born, and went on to make everyone's lives terrible. A bickering bunch of rich people, scared by the prospect of workers having a say, trying to prevent it. Some by renaming their party five or six times, some by appealing to the most backwards and conservative elements, and finally by pretending they didn't despise each other and 'work together' to ensure they were the only choice besides Labour. Come to think of it, not much has changed.



# The Easy Rider tragedy and Peter Whittall's easy ride



The Easy Rider sank in the Foveaux Strait in 2012 after being hit by a rogue wave. One child and seven men, including the skipper, Rewai Karetai, drowned. Faced with this tragedy, the government decided it needed to prosecute the partner of the skipper, Gloria Davis, in order to send a message to fishing vessel operators of the risks of ignoring government regulations. The contrast with Pike River is massive, writes Harry Johnson.

Whether or not the message has been heard by the intended audience, it is not the only message to come out of the tragedy, especially when the event is considered in conjunction with the Pike River disaster.

The classic and immediate message to be read from the Easy Rider tragedy is one of human vulnerability to the power and fickleness of natural forces.

As one of the bereaved relatives noted the 'sinking had a natural cause. It was one of those things that happen. Foveaux Strait is an iffy strait'.

The tragedy was therefore one more story of the great dangers of the seas around the coast of New Zealand, the frailty of human life, the coldness of the southern waters, even the determination but always the risks of keeping up old ways, the accepted risks of continuing to exercise traditional rights.

Nevertheless, the government in the form of Maritime New Zealand charged Rewai Karetai's partner, Gloria Davis, the sole director of the company that owned the vessel, under the Maritime Transport Act and the Health and Safety in

Employment Act.

A nominal director of a small business, and of modest means, she defended herself. She was found guilty but is yet to be sentenced. The maximum penalties include 12 months in prison and fines of up to \$250,000.

The local view was that Rewai Karetai 'was his own person' and 'no-one could have told him what to do if he did not want to do it'.

The judge recognised this and accepted Rewai Karetai skippered the boat and made the relevant decisions in regard to the operation of the boat.

But he still found that Gloria Davis should have prevented Rewai Karetai from taking the actions he did.

The message the government conveyed, regardless of the realities of the power relationship within the family and the suffering of the bereaved partner, was that its regulations, passed to ensure the safety of all, must always be obeyed. If not, it would punish without fear or favour.

The story was different for Pike River.

The Pike River disaster needs no introduction at all. Nor do the main characters, including the corporate Department of Labour, and Peter Whittall, the initial "white knight" who eventually fell from grace once the facts started to emerge.

To compare, the Department of Labour laid 12 charges against Peter Whittall in November 2011 under Health and Safety in Employment Act, each charge carrying a maximum fine of \$250,000. The number who died at Pike River was of course significantly greater and the event significantly more notorious.

The government ascribed a commercial aspect to the sinking of the Easy Rider but certainly acquisitive corporate action to obtain massive monetary gain was at the heart of the Pike River operation. No issue has ever been raised that Maritime New Zealand's administration of maritime regulations were lax in the case of the Easy Rider.

But this was a central issue in relation to the Department of Labour's administration of health and safety regulations in relation to Pike River.



## Workplace safety

After the Pike River disaster, the shattered Department of Labour was incorporated into the Ministry of Business Innovation and Enterprise (MBIE).

Given the facts of Pike River, the public were of course shocked when the charges against Whittall were dropped by MBIE and Whittall's lawyer's proposed payment of \$3.41 million to the families of the 29 victims of the disaster was announced.

Despite all appearances to the contrary, the parties to the announcements and the judge denied this was a 'backroom deal' to end the prosecution. MBIE insisted that its case against Whittall was dropped only because it was unlikely to result in a conviction. But a letter from Whittall's lawyer, later released, revealed a proposal to MBIE relating the dropping of charges and the payment, before the charges were dropped.

The letter included the claim that the Department of Labour's investigation of the disaster had been defective. With this information in the public domain, MBIE issued a strong denial



about the quality of its investigation saying 'that a very good legal investigation was done by one of our most experienced officers'.

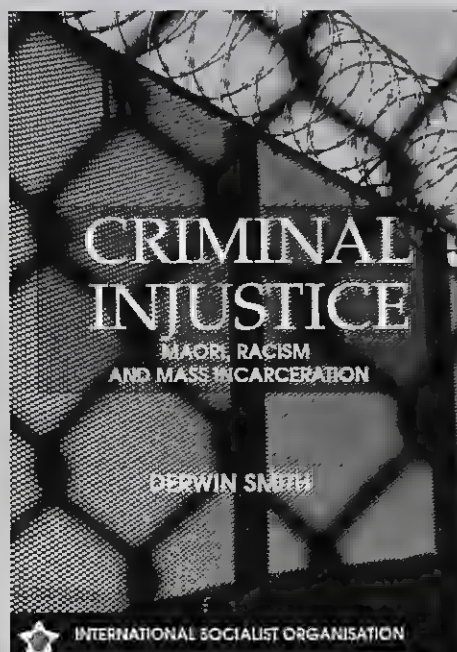
MBIE also noted that respondents to such legal action would of course always claim that the case against them was inadequate and flawed.

The mess of the Pike River legal action conveyed several messages.

It spoke of a government unwilling to bring perpetrators to account or to allow the public to see justice done.

The public was left wondering if the prospect of further scrutiny of the Department of Labour's regulation of safety and health up to the disaster had influenced the decision to drop the case.

Most profoundly, it conveyed the message that money could bully and buy its escape from prosecution and that our system of justice was tainted. Together the two actions revealed a government eager to prosecute the weak and vulnerable, reluctant to deal with the wrongs of the wealthy and powerful; the existence of one law for the rich and one for poor; and a glimpse of the reality of a corporate government working for the corporate interest. They also provide further evidence of the structural racism of the justice system in New Zealand in which Maori are not only more likely to be prosecuted, but also convicted.



## Pamphlet on prison system

Michelle Alexander's 2011 book **The New Jim Crow** documents the rise of mass incarceration in the USA, and link this to entrenched racism, poverty and injustice. The privatising and 'outsourcing' of prison as business, and the 'law and order' turn are part of neoliberal politics the world over.

**Criminal Injustice**, by Derwin Smith, lays bare the striking parallels between the US and NZ. The prison system disproportionately affects Maori and Pasifika people. The powers of the state – to harass, humiliate, detain and lock-up – are felt everyday in brown people's lives. The history of white settler colonial rule has relied on locking up and disenfranchising Maori people. A new phase in capitalism, and the symptoms of poverty in recession, looks to imprisonment again. This pamphlet explains how the criminal injustice system works in lockstep with racism and poverty.



# Te Puea

## and Waikato resistance against World War I

Te Puea Herangi is a very important figure, and one of the most influential women, in the political history of Aotearoa. She was to play a central role alongside three successive kings as a talented organiser and central force among the Tainui people. In this article, Juliet Thomborson looks at her formative political role leading the anti-conscription movement in Waikato during World War I.

Te Puea Herangi was born in 1883 into the kahui ariki, the family of the first Maori King, by way of her mother being the daughter of Tawhiao Te Wherowhero, the second Maori King. Her childhood was overshadowed by the King Movement's defeat in the Taranaki Land Wars to government forces, and the harsh land confiscations that followed.

The words of peace from her grandfather King Tawhiao left a deep impression on Tu Puea, and she would be guided by these words as she organised one of the most successful, non-violent, anti-conscription campaigns in Aotearoa. When King Tawhiao made peace with the Crown in 1881, he forbade Waikato people to fight ever again: "The killing of men must stop; the destruction of land must stop ... Do not allow blood to flow from this time on".

### Native Contingent Committee

When World War I broke out, the military leadership did not trust 'native peoples' to fight in a war among Europeans.

But at the urging of some Maori leaders, particularly the four Maori MPs at the time, Maori were given permission to fight.

The Native Contingent Committee organised Maori recruitment on a voluntary basis. Apirana Ngata and Maui Pomare, in particular, were key figures who were determined to prove

that Maori could and should do everything that Pakeha did.

They pushed for Maori to be able to do more than garrison duty, the only duty Maori could be trusted to do initially, but to also bear arms.

The Native Contingent Committee, however, was a dismal failure.

They could not meet the set quotas for reinforcement beyond the first contingent of 505 in 1915.

Further, Maori were not enlisting evenly across the country.

Recruitment was especially low in Pomare's electorate, which covered Taranaki, Maniapoto, and Waikato.

This was a growing embarrassment to Pomare, the Maori members, and the government. The continuing slaughter overseas and the Committee's failure to meet the quota led to the extension of conscription to Maori in mid-1917.

However, to add insult to injury, conscription was imposed on Maori from Tainui-Waikato land district only. Districts that had the lowest recruitment rate precisely because there was still bitterness and resentment towards the Crown for the harsh land confiscations after 1860s.

### Resistance to conscription

Te Puea and others in the Waikato followed King Tawhiao's injunction against bloodshed and unanimously agreed that no Kingitanga supporter should serve overseas. Around Pakeha,

***Conscription was imposed on Maori from Tainui-Waikato land, which had the lowest recruitment rate precisely because there was still bitterness towards the Crown for land confiscations after the 1860s."***

the Kingitanga leaders were neutral, saying it should be left to individual choice. They took this stance to make prosecution under wartime regulations and harassment by the authorities more difficult. Among their own people, Waikato enlistment was actively discouraged.

Te Puea was also of the view that Waikato had 'its own King'. "They tell us to fight for king and country," Te Puea was fond of saying at the time, referring to a

recruitment poster. "Well, that's all right. We've got a king. But we haven't got a country. That's been taken off us. Let them give us back our land and then maybe we'll think again." When Waikato fought for their king and their country, they were punished for this crime fifty years before. She questions, 'If it was wrong then, what made it right now?'

It was during World War I that Te Puea emerged as a leader. At a hui where Waikato came together to discuss conscription, Tu Puea opposed conscription by singing a song lamenting





A recruitment cartoon from a 1915 issue of the New Zealand Observer. It shows a Maori soldier charging two Turkish soldiers with the ghost of a warrior behind him. Cartoons like this attempted to evoke the spirit of Tumatauenga to encourage Maori participation in the war. Te Puea was fond of saying of posters calling on Maori to fight for king and country, 'Well, that's all right. We've got a king. But we haven't got a country. That's been taken off us'.



the disinheritance of the people of the Waikato, and advising Te Rata, the Maori King, and his followers not to compromise in the face of this injustice. It was interpreted by the meeting for what it was: a refusal to participate in military service.

The hui reaffirmed opposition and asked Te Puea to offer refuge for conscripted men with her at Te Paina pa.

## Arrest and punishment

Pomare knew Te Puea's non-violent stance so he advised War Minister Allen to jail those gathered at Te Paina. Police arrived at Te Paina and read the names of those to be arrested.

Nobody moved. Te Puea made it clear that she would not cooperate.

The police began arresting men they believed were on the list.

That the police were not attacked was entirely Te Puea's influence.

That said, passive resistance did not mean that she held back in her criticisms in words as this telegram to Pomare reveals where she chides him to 'laugh from your exalted position at my people who are being imprisoned like slaves in accordance with the works of the

Pakeha'.

Life in detention was unpleasant for those men arrested.

Punishment for them when they refused to wear military uniform increased from receiving only bread and water, to not having any blankets to sleep under, to being paraded in front of 1000 soldiers or more. Te Puea brought the men food, but it never reached them. The anti-conscriptionists did know she was there though.

Mokona, one of the detainees, described how Te Puea would sit outside the prison and when men went to the whare mimi (toilet) they were able to catch a glimpse of her. This was enough to make them want to 'invent an excuse to go to the whare mimi. The fact that she was there gave us heart to continue.'

## Resistance to the end

Only a handful of Tainui men were put in uniform, and none of the Tainui conscripts were sent overseas.

When the war ended, Cabinet decided against the military's advice to release all Maori prisoners on 20 May 1919. The

decision was never made public because the Government was determined not to treat other defaulters 'leniently'.

As historian Michael King puts it, "Te Puea's claim to leadership in Waikato had been established by her rank and personal qualities, and confirmed by Mahuta's [the previous King] selection of her for special duties." In her leadership of the anticonscription movement, she "demonstrated beyond doubt her ability to bring people together, organise their living activities on a large scale, control them on occasions of tension, and articulate their feelings to themselves and to outside authority.

She had made herself known dramatically to Maori in Waikato who had not previously been aware of her; and she had come to the attention of Pakeha authorities in Auckland and Wellington."

From this point, her former political rivals in the Kingitanga were eclipsed. From 1918, the story of Te Puea and the story of Kingitanga are synonymous".



# Aim of 'remembrance' is erasing past

On Anzac Day 1967, at the height of the Vietnam War, members of the Progressive Youth Movement in Christchurch tried to lay a wreath following the dawn service in memory of those killed by imperialism in Vietnam. They were arrested and charged with disorderly behaviour. Lest we forget? It's more like lest we remember, says Dougal McNeill.

Anzac Day serves as a carnival of nationalist reaction, a day of public ritual aimed at promoting forgetting: forgetting the real legacy of New Zealand militarism in favour of a sentimental nationalism, an anti-political celebration of national unity.

In the last 20 years, Anzac Day has undergone a sustained and emotional revival. The overtly militaristic parts of the day have been re-framed to try and present the ceremony as to do with memory and reflection: children may now wear their grandparents' medals, and, as the number of living veterans gets fewer each year, a sombre mood is encouraged. According to the government's official site, "we recognise Anzac Day as a central marker of our nationhood."

This serves entirely reactionary ends. The New Zealand military has, from its part in the imperialist intervention with Australia in East Timor in 1999 onwards, been able to rehabilitate its public image as a 'peacekeeping' part of the 'international community.' Anzac Day played a key ideological role in this. New Zealand troops served in the US-led devastation of Afghanistan for over twice as many years as any fighting in World War One, and yet this passed with little significant public protest or opposition. Jerry Mateparae, as a military leader, was involved in ordering NZ troops to hand Afghan captives to US forces for torture. Now he is the head of state, and can pontificate at Anzac Day on "the commitment, courage, comradeship and spirit of all our service men and women,



"Our troops" have propped up Hamid Karzai's corrupt regime in Afghanistan for more than a decade, including handing prisoners to the Americans for torture.

who exemplify the true Anzac spirit."

Whatever personal memories participants may treasure of grandparents, this is a wholly political day, serving political ends. Socialists have no interest in "our nationhood" – we are for *internationalism*, for unity between workers across borders and for the maximum possible disunity and division between those whose system lives off war and empire – the ruling class – and those with the power to challenge it, the workers of the world.

Governor General Jerry Mateparae's 2014 Anzac Day statement calls on people to "remember not only those who served during the First World War but also the servicemen and women who have answered the call to defend our freedoms and those of others since, often very far from home."

New Zealand military adventures have never been about defending democracy, however. Working-class men and women have been sent abroad to fight and die

for the interests of the New Zealand ruling class's imperialist adventures.

Britain and France sent New Zealand troops to fight to suppress revolutionary movements and prevent Germany from being the dominant power in Europe. The British Empire's troops fought Koreans from 1950 onwards as part in the Cold War. Five years later New Zealand troops served as part of the US-led intervention of the Korean Peninsula to prevent communism in the South and to prevent the civil war into a US-backed regime and global domination.

During the Vietnam War, New Zealand was a major ally of the US. New Zealand troops fought to suppress communist movements and to prevent the spread of communism. The Vietnam War was the last of the British Empire's last-ditch imperialist adventures to control of the Pacific.

And it took New Zealand troops were killed and 147 wounded between 1964 and 1972 in Vietnam, serving under US-occupied forces. The Vietnam War was a horrendous war for independence; the New Zealand troops signed up into New Zealand troops were treated as so much cannon fodder, being exposed to chemical weapons including Agent Orange during their time in Vietnam and then suffered little support on their return home.

For the last 20 years, New Zealand forces have backed the corrupt and murderous Taliban regime in Afghanistan.



# 1914 - 2014: Centenary of slaughter

So much for "our freedoms." What about democracy? War abroad has always been accompanied by attacks on civil rights at home. Labour leaders were jailed in World War One for opposing conscription.

Nowadays, the objection goes, Anzac Day is used to *remember* war, not to celebrate it. Most people who take part do so to honour family members; what has this to do with politics? Bi-partisan political rhetoric works hard to promote this anti-political view of Anzac Day.

Helen Clark, in a speech at Anzac Cove in 2005, concluded with the reflection that "our responsibility" was to "work for a world in which future generations will not face the horror which these brave men faced with bravery and with honour." All of this promotes a very particular political position.

The government's own ANZAC website is surprisingly frank: "Anzac Day now promotes a sense of unity, perhaps more effectively than any other day on the national calendar. People whose politics, beliefs and aspirations are widely different can nevertheless share a genuine sorrow at the loss of so many lives in war, and a real respect for those who have endured warfare on behalf of the country we live in."

A "sense of unity" is what is needed if workers in New Zealand are to associate their interests with those of their rulers, and to see "us" as a coherent group. It separates off militarism, nationalism and the "national interest" from "politics, beliefs and aspirations." No wonder both Labour and National follow the same lines here: Clark committed over \$2.6 million for the updated war memorial in Wellington, and Key can't wait to see it finished.

This idea of a "sacred" occasion is

ideological through-and-through. It would not work so effectively were it more openly militaristic and political. It is, rather, in the emotional aspects of the day that Anzac does its political work. Ideology is about how we are 'hailed' by ideas, how we respond to identities when they call to us, how the 'imagined community' of the nation can be created. For that process to work effectively it needs to communicate to the heart and the guts as much as to the head. Anzac Day serves that purpose perfectly.

Talk of Anzac Day as something sacred and special is nothing new. On Anzac Day 1928 members of the Communist Party in Dunedin distributed a leaflet at the dawn service calling on veterans: "don't be a soldier of capitalism"! Capitalism, the leaflet argued, is "the system which makes war a glorious thing for bankers and the profiteers, but a hell for workers."

"The capitalists make profit out of wars," the Dunedin communists went on, "and that is why they try to glorify war by means of Anzac Day parades." The Evening Post the next day described this leaflet as a "desecration", and quoted one clergyman as saying that "the broadcasting of such propaganda on Anzac Day is one of the most despicable things ever perpetrated on the public of Dunedin."

An anti-imperialist and internationalist spirit exists in the history of the New Zealand labour movement: in the anti-conscription conference of trade

unionists held in Wellington in January 1916; in the mill-workers' wives who assaulted and harassed the pro-war "White Feather League" of jingoist middle-class women in Christchurch during World War One; in the soldiers stationed in Cairo during World War Two who took part in the (swiftly suppressed)

soldiers' parliament, voting in left-wing measures and tossing out the Tories; in the syndicalists, anarchists, socialists and communists of the anti-New Zealand, migrant and native-born, Maori and Pakeha, veteran and civilian, united by their political hostility to nationalism and the New Zealand state.

The workers "have no country," in the words of the Communist Manifesto. This is still our slogan: we have more in common with those struggling in Turkey than with those like Clark or Key

who celebrate 'our nation' in the history of invasions of Turkey.

The struggle for a clear revolutionary programme in Aotearoa involves the struggle to shatter this myth of Anzac Day, and the myth of the 'community' that it represents. That means hard lines, and new ways of thinking our identity. I want to end with an example of one of those, from the late, great Alasdair Hulett's song of the anti-war revolutionary John McLean. McLean was jailed in Scotland in World War One for organising against the war. In Hulett's song he says this:

*'A bayonet that's a weapon with a working man at either end,  
Betray your country, serve your class.  
Don't sign up for war my friend.'*

***Nowadays, the objection goes, Anzac Day is used to remember war, not to celebrate it. Most people who take part do so to honour family members; what has this to do with politics? Bi-partisan political rhetoric works hard to promote this anti-political view of Anzac Day.***



# The culture of neoliberalism

The left in Australia is weak. No force has come close to occupying the space of the old Communist Party or been able to provide a political vision that has gripped the minds of a new generation. We can point to “subjective” failures by leaders of the unions, the mainstream left and the far left but there is not one country in the Western world where the revolutionary left, in all its different sizes, politics and perspectives, has made a serious breakthrough. There must be something about the objective situation that has led to such difficulties, writes Ben Hillier, of Socialist Alternative.

British former PM Margaret Thatcher famously said that “there is no such thing as society”. The goal of the neoliberal project she championed was to dismantle the welfare states and institutional barriers, in place since the 1930s and 1940s, that were seen to stifle the ability of corporations to make huge profits. It sought to break the bonds of social solidarity and create a culture and economy in which every

human is an entrepreneur-manager of their own lives. The neoliberal ideal is a transactional world in which human relationships take on the form of buyer-seller exchanges and in which everything and everyone is debased, reduced to a market valuation.

Thirty and more years of union busting, privatisation of state assets, deregulation of markets and undermining social welfare have given some reality to that vision. The welfare state still provides more than what was on offer previously, but wealth inequality is back to the levels of the 1920s. Importantly, members of the so-called “millennial” generation (18-36 year olds) find it difficult to see the world through any other lens than individuality.

Two of the main contributing factors to this neoliberal success story are the

sustained decline in working class struggle and the collapse of socialism as an authoritative alternative to liberal capitalist ideology.

Almost a century ago, the Russian Revolution proved in practice that a new world was possible. For decades, millions of workers around the world viewed the Soviet Union as a beacon of hope in an otherwise oppressive and exploitative capitalist world. Counter-

***With the left in disarray, the political right’s assertion that “there is no alternative” to neoliberal capitalism was widely accepted – and forcefully rammed through.***

revolution had by the late 1920s transformed the country into a brutal dictatorship, yet it wasn’t until the events in Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968 that many of the Western left’s illusions were undermined. With the Soviets putting down rebellions in the Eastern Bloc, Stalinist parties faced a crisis of legitimacy from

which they never recovered.

The successes of the Western ruling classes in reviving economic performance after the multiple economic crises of the mid-1970s and early 1980s further undermined the left. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc at the end of the decade was the symbolic nail in the coffin.

Since the 1800s, history had been on the side of the working class and the socialist mission. Now, it seemed, history had finally proven Marxism a fraud.

With the left in disarray and the ruling class on the offensive, the political

right asserted that there is no alternative to neoliberal capitalism was widely accepted – and forcefully rammed through. The resultant spontaneous rebellions can be seen in myriad forms.

## Atomisation

Working class communities within which solidarity and bonds and associations were long ago fragmented by the capitalist expansion of suburbs. The process has been accelerated in our largest cities, where the inner city has become suburban wasteland, cut off from amenities and where more than an hour’s drive is needed to get to the city.

They were portrayed as oases of reason and civility in an uncertain and volatile metropolis.

But in these isolated ghettos full of quarter million living, people’s new neighbourhoods are readable to the rest of the city.

Union density has dropped from more than 50 percent to less than 20 percent for those under 25. It is less than 10 percent.

The end of centralised wage fixing and the move to enterprise bargaining and individual contracts have left more and more people on their own against the boss.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions’ submission into last year’s Howe Inquiry into Insecure Work showed that precarious labour – casual, temp and contract work – has steadily increased to



# Theory

one of highest rates in the West. And as academic Michael Pusey has noted, "[T]he deregulation of the labour market has left us with working hours that intrude more into family and weekend time than in any other OECD country except Italy."

Today "the local", the establishment where people go to talk after work, is more likely to be the lounge or the bedroom – where people are absorbed in TV (for three hours on average per night) or interacting through social media. The 2012 Yellow Social Media Report found that more than 60 percent of people on the internet use social media, typically for more than six hours every week. The figures dramatically increase for those under the age of 40.

## Cultural decay

The German philosopher Hegel argued that the only true knowledge is the knowledge of freedom, and that only in freedom can true knowledge be acquired. Writing in the 19th century, he knew that humanity wasn't yet free, but argued that its nature is to become free. For Hegel, freedom doesn't exist until humanity makes it a universal condition, a truth for all. This was a truly revolutionary insight.

His standpoint, later developed by Marx, was a thorough critique of conservative politics as much as anything else. Positing an unchanging (and, for some, unknowable) "inner essence" of things and people was, he thought, stifling: if the truth lies in what is, rather than what could be, then we are condemned to a world in which freedom is already denied. Humanity deserves much better. Neoliberal culture is the epitome of the stifling conservatism Hegel railed against.

Everywhere it counsels us to turn our back on the world, and the future, to turn inward as individuals and unearth "who we really are".

An example of the painful confidence trick this undertaking represents is captured every other night on reality TV. Rarely is a singing contestant's soul deep enough for the Idol judges. Every third person breaks down in the humiliation of finding out that what they privately love and enjoy so much – that intimate expression of "who I really am", as many confide in the judges – is considered a public horror. But for the sacred few, there is the glory of having the x-factor – that something within that sets them apart.

We may shrug that it is only a TV show. But it illustrates the broader logic of contemporary culture. It is implicit in almost every aspect of neoliberal existence that what is unmarketable is worthless. A whole generation judges its inner worth by its capacity to match the artificial forms of fashion models or the carefully cultivated images or skill sets of superstar athletes and singers. But in the world of Photoshop and the new eugenics of the "next top model" or "biggest loser", everyone is found wanting.

The impact of this inward turn, of transforming human existence and intimacy into marketable goods, has been profound. Powerlessness, uncertainty and displacement are permanent features of society. The epidemic of mental illness, which affects a staggering 45 percent of Australians at some point in their lives, is the sharp end of it. Its more mundane reflection is in the general acceptance, even if not articulated, that there is no alternative but to retreat into those very personal lives that often seem the source of anguish yet, tragically, seem also to offer potential salvation. So industries geared to redressing imperfections – self-help, dieting, cosmetics, therapies, supplements – flourish. And the more inadequate people are, the more distant perfection seems, the more extreme the products become.

## Democratic deficit

If neoliberalism has deeply penetrated private lives, it should be no surprise that it has impacted the operation of public institutions.

The last 30 years have deepened what has been termed the "democratic deficit". This refers to the process through which the parties historically associated with the labour movement have become indistinguishable in many respects from the conservative parties of the rich. It also refers to the ways in which governments have either ceded power to or had their democratic mandate undermined by unelected capitalist institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Economic Forum, the European Central Bank etc. In Australia there is both a perceived and a real deficit.

The perceived deficit is reflected in the electoral statistics. On one hand, the vote for the minor parties and independents – which is usually based on their capacity to construct a "political outsider" narrative – has climbed from less than 10 percent in the 1980s to around 20 percent in the 2013 election. On the other, the informal vote has risen and the voter turnout declined: if the 1990s average for these had been maintained, there would have been some 700,000 extra valid votes cast at the 2013 election.

The real deficit is evidenced not just in the rightward shift of the ALP, but in the transfer of certain powers from democratically accountable (in whatever limited way) governments into the hands of unelected bureaucrats.

An example of the process is the fate of the Reserve Bank. Financial deregulation in the 1980s removed governmental control over monetary policy, except for manipulation of the interest rate.

The bank gained full operational independence in the early 1990s.



Today this “independence” is held sacrosanct by the ruling class – but only because the bank is controlled by its proxies on the board.

## Politics

One way that social alienation is transposed into politics is through the liberal moral justification for greed – that if every individual pursues their own self-interest, then the greatest welfare will accrue to society as a whole – finding expression in the “be the change you want to see” ethos that is so pervasive today. Many of us rightly pour scorn on the self-absorbed and indulgent nature of such “politics”. Yet there is little doubt that it is a product of the times – politics as self-help. The democratic deficit compounds this phenomenon. In Western democracies, the default position of people seeking social change is to use democratic institutions like parliament to replace the people administering the system. The more difficult it is to distinguish between alternative ruling parties, and the more impotent governments seem in the face of state institutions and corporate interests, the less credibility politicians have. The greater the perceived deficit, the less investment people are likely to have in the institutions. That is something to be welcomed. But in the absence of some other realistic alternative that can address the particular grievances at hand, it creates rival pressures. On one hand it reinforces the retreat into private lives as people attempt to escape perceived injustice, rather than challenge it. On the other, it can lead to profoundly anti-democratic conclusions. That can be seen not only in places like Greece and Hungary, where fascism is a significant political force. In Australia, the 2013 Lowy attitudinal poll found that only 39 percent of people 18 to 29 years old consider democracy

“preferable to any other form of government”. (The figure is 74% for those over the age of 60.)

## Organisation

It would be easy to draw nihilistic conclusions from the foregoing impressions. Some people do, declaring that everything has changed so dramatically that the left must do things differently, stop trying to build revolutionary organisations and instead just participate in “networks” or dissolve into the new formations that are intermittently thrown up. We shouldn’t underestimate how quickly the working class can be “reconstituted as a political subject” (which is a pretentious way of saying “able to break out of its passivity, identify the enemy and start swinging”). Whatever changes neoliberalism has wrought, the world has not been qualitatively changed. In some ways, the neoliberal economic agenda has pushed us back into the pre-World War Two past more than it has thrust us into some uncharted future. The basic structures and dynamics of the capitalist system remain: there is a minority of capitalists at the top exploiting the majority of workers at the bottom. The competition between the bosses enforces an incessant drive to accumulate capital, which leads to crises. Revolutionary movements inevitably break out in one place or another as a result. The absence of mass struggle in Australia is crippling, but there have been great retreats in other times and other places. They have never lasted. We have seen in North Africa and the

Middle East just how rapidly the political situation can be transformed in a time of crisis. In parts of Europe also, while there has not been a mass radicalisation, the social struggles against austerity continue to create headaches for the establishment. People are transformed and develop their capacities through these struggles. That is why socialists are always arguing to maintain people in rallies and demonstrations and picket lines. Even if the results are not world shattering in the here and now, they can help lay the

***The absence of mass struggle in Australia is crippling, but there have been great retreats in other times and other places. They have never lasted. We have seen in North Africa and the Middle East just how rapidly the political situation can be transformed in a time of crisis.***

basis for the future by drawing in new people who would otherwise have few options but to turn inward and accept things as they are. In every new struggle, participants grapple with very traditional questions: Who are our allies and who are our enemies? Do workers have the power and capacity to change the world? Do we need only social reform or do we need revolution? Do we need only a movement or do we need a party? The questions are not always posed in such straightforward ways. Even when they are, the answers are not always obvious to those grappling with them. They nevertheless inform the strategic and tactical responses of every person and group in a movement. Yet struggle alone will not teach masses of people the correctness or otherwise of revolutionary politics. Winning people to socialism requires people who are educated and trained in revolutionary politics being able to make convincing arguments about what to do. That can’t be done by adapting to prevailing moods or pretending that political differences – like that between reform and revolution – are



# IPCC report offers horror - and hope

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a remarkable document.

Kevin Hodder reports.

It has been compiled by over 300 scientists, is over 2600 pages long, and is the accumulation of evidence from every significant climate study of the last decade. By the standards of a scientific document, it is the equivalent of a bloodcurdling scream of panic, but also a stern rebuke to the inaction of governments worldwide.

The warnings are dire, but the conclusion is clear: This is a crisis that can be averted, or at least mitigated, with rapid action, and the financial cost of action is remarkably low.

In this most recent report, AR5, the IPCC have used the strongest language to date to present the consensus of climate scientists everywhere: "It is extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century."

Despite decades of conferences on reducing carbon emissions such as the "Kyoto protocol", the report shows

global emissions are growing, and we are on target to cross into the danger zone of 2degC to 3degC average temp increase.

The report lays out in detail what we already feared, should we continue down the path we're on: the extreme weather experienced over the last few years - extreme "50 or 100-year" floods, droughts, hurricanes and unique events such as the devastating "polar vortex" - are going to become

commonplace. Ecosystems will be badly disturbed, coral and fish stocks can be expected to fall sharply, and coastline-altering sea level rise is certain. Add to this decreasing food crop yields and declining access to clean drinking water, and the outlook is bleak. The report highlighted the uneven impacts of climate change, emphasising the disproportionate suffering of people living in poverty.

However, the report is far from all doom and gloom. A number of methods could

be undertaken to drastically reduce the carbon output of our civilisations and dramatically mitigate the doomsday scenarios being described. These

"climate-resilient pathways" are sustainable-development trajectories that combine adaptation and mitigation. We already have most of the technologies required to slash our carbon footprint almost entirely. Surprisingly, though it features prominently, green energy production methods, such as wind, hydro and solar do not top the list. Instead, the report recommends poverty

reduction, livelihood security and human development (education, nutrition, health facilities etc) as top targets for the most effective mitigation of the effects of climate change. The report also puts rough dollar figures on the cost to implement them, with a surprisingly low, eminently possible total figure.

Of course, the only question for capitalists is, who is going to pay for it?

*By the standards of a scientific document, it is the equivalent of a bloodcurdling scream of panic.*

## The culture of neoliberalism continued

unimportant.

In any setting where the question "What do we do now?" is posed, political differences can be papered over only for so long before being thrust into the open when a serious tactical or strategic disagreement emerges. People can be trained as revolutionaries only in the course of fighting for their ideas, not fudging them. Even then the task is not simply winning people over to socialism in the course of struggling alongside them. Many radicals can quickly come to see the correctness of Marxism's critique

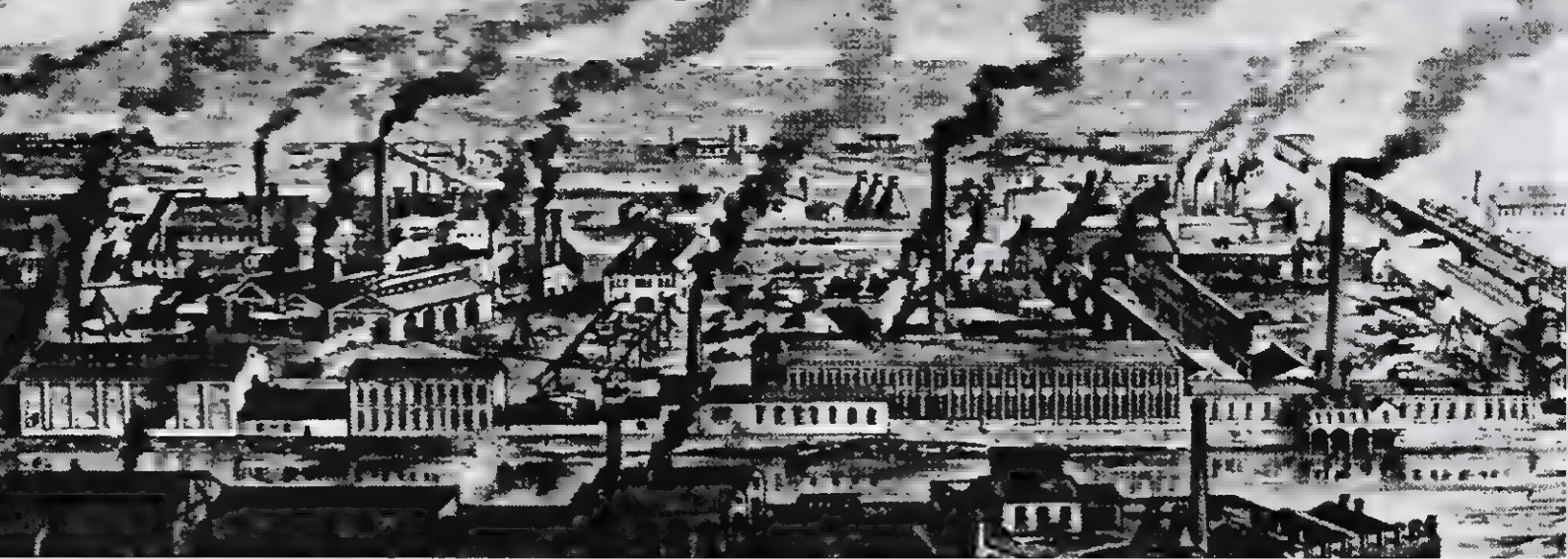
of capitalism or its usefulness as a guide to action, but there are further questions that have to be addressed. Earlier generations had what many considered a living example of socialism to back up their arguments. Today the legacy of Stalinism still weighs down even those political currents (such as Socialist Alternative, the publisher of Red Flag) that have been most hostile to it. Being able to explain the hows and whys of the failures of Stalinism and social democracy is as crucial to re-establishing a revolutionary Marxist tradition.

That's why, despite the changes we have witnessed over the past 30 years, and the ways in which those changes have impacted society, building clearly revolutionary groups remains of vital importance. Without revolutionary organisations that can collectively train and educate their members, the prevailing ideas and moods ultimately win out.

*This is an abridged version of an article that first appeared in the Australian socialist newspaper Red Flag. A full version is available at [www.redflag.org.au](http://www.redflag.org.au)*



# Climate change and socialism



The future facing the planet, in the form of climate change looks bleak. Rises in the planet's temperature are set to raise the global sealevel, which would see many coastal cities and low-lying areas and submerged. Extreme weather cycles could wreak havoc with food production. In the worst case scenario, mass extinction could wipe out millions of species of plants and animals, writes Johnny Fersterer-Gawith.

The Marshall Islands, just 2m above sea level, are threatened by climate change. Sea levels on the Marshall Islands have risen 7mm a year since 1993. The global average is 0.4mm.

It's no wonder the Marshall Islands' vice-president called New Zealand climate change plans "a joke". New Zealand is the fifth-highest emitter per head in the world.

Minister of Climate Change Negotiation Tim Groser dismissed leading scientists' criticisms as "complete and utter nonsense", telling them to "stick to the knitting."

The word "crisis" is over-used in socialist writing, but how else can we describe climate change? Potential problems created by substantial rises in the planet's temperature range from massive hikes in global sea levels to extreme weather cycles destroying food production. Mass extinction is a worst case scenario, wiping out much of earth's biodiversity.

The contrast between the concern of ordinary people, the consensus amongst informed scientists, and the inaction of governments could not be greater. Climate change poses a massive

dilemma for human civilisation and our relationship with the earth, upon which we rely for our existence.

However bleak the situation may be, despair helps no-one. Climate change is a political problem – a problem of social organisation. So it requires political solutions.

Efforts to get competing national economies to reduce their emissions to pre-1990 levels, such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, have all failed. This is because trade structures between countries and inter-imperialist rivalries dominate the globe: the planet's finite resources are plundered and fought over. There is no planning to capitalism.

This poses a problem for those who would like to "green" the system. Capitalism relies on unfettered economic growth and reckless misuse of resources. It is based on competition and profit is its driving motive: the kind of co-operation and planning that would be required to coordinate joint reductions in emissions globally runs counter to the logic of the system.

Rapidly and substantially reducing

dependence on fossil fuels; organising reforestation on a global scale; meeting the food needs of the 7 billion–12 billion people who will populate earth; these are urgent, practical tasks for humanity now. They put the question of revolution – and of democratic socialism – concretely. The ecological crisis requires realistic solutions: one hundred more years of capitalism isn't one of those.

Gradual increases in global temperature made possible the evolution of the many complex life forms that now exist on earth. The atmosphere acts as a blanket which keeps the earth at an average temperature of 15 degC. Without this atmospheric layer, the sun's rays would simply bounce off the earth and be reflected back into space. The atmosphere around the earth regulates global temperature, making life possible. Unlike past climatic change, increases in global temperature now are due to rising levels in the atmosphere of one important gas, carbon dioxide. Its levels have been accelerated through the burning of fossil fuels and the logging of forests.

CO2 lasts up to 100 years in the atmosphere. It exists in a tiny



# Environment

percentage of the air, at around 0.03% but, because it is so effective at absorbing infrared radiation, or heat from the sun, small increases can have dramatic effects on the warming the planet. The more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere the warmer the planet becomes.

Since 1750 and the start of industrialization, CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere have grown from 280 parts per million (ppm) to today's level of 387 ppm with an increase of 70% between 1970 and 2004.

Deforestation, industrialization and the massive burning of fossil fuels have led to carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere higher than at any time in the history. Radiological data shows CO<sub>2</sub> is at its highest levels in 650 millennia. Present levels of CO<sub>2</sub> and the consequential rise in global temperature are the direct result of industrial growth.

Scientists predict a rise in the earth's temperature by 1.5degC to 2degC by 2050, regardless of any action taken. This will set in motion thermal heating of the oceans which will continue for hundreds of years. At the present rate of greenhouse gas emissions (set to rise by 25% to 90% over the next few decades) the possibility of much larger warming patterns is a scary probability.

It is essential the level of CO<sub>2</sub> does not rise to around 450ppm, which would see increases in temperature spiral out of control.

If 2degC is a critical threshold in climatic stability, then a 5degC or 6degC warming caused by continued greenhouse emissions would see the extinction of 50%-60% of plant and animal species, unable to cope with the rapid pace of global temperature increases.

The collapse of the Greenland ice sheet would see sea level rises that would place many coastal cities and small island nations underwater.

## How capitalism causes climate change

Capitalism, in its present form, relies on the burning of three substances most responsible for global warming: coal, oil and natural gas. Contemporary capitalism is dependent on these sources of energy.

At present US\$13 trillion globally is invested in infrastructure directly related to oil and gas production. This is an enormous problem because the corporations that control this capital and infrastructure have massive lobbying powers over governments around the world. Any attempt to regulate and lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be met by massive resistance by these groups.

Capitalism is dependent on the permanent expansion of industry, and other forms of economic "growth". It will always run into conflict with the finite resources of the earth. One of the central and inescapable contradictions of capitalism is that production on the individual company level is highly planned, but the broader market remains essentially unplanned.

Disorganization, waste and overproduction are intrinsic to the system. Capital will flow like water to

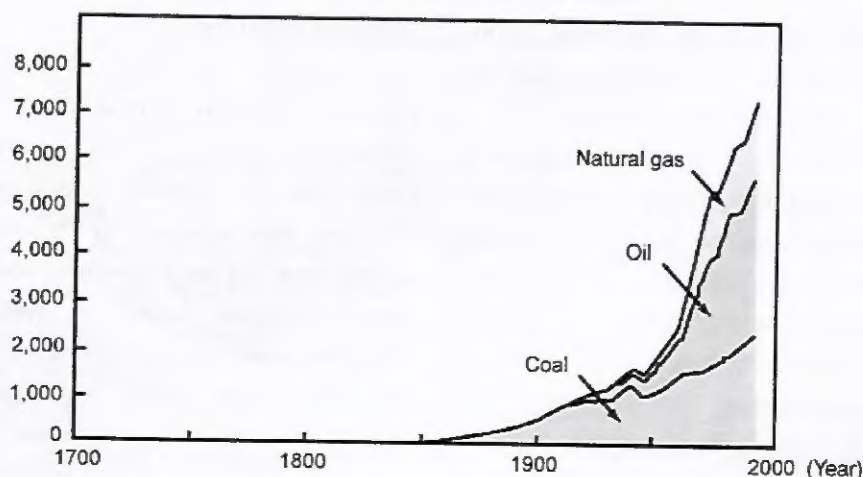
whatever industry will fastest make a profit. This is why oil will not be abandoned any time soon, and why so-called "Green" technologies, such as agro-fuels are far from sustainable in their use of valuable land for food production. Their use is geared not for addressing ecological limits, but to maintain profitability for investors, or, in cases like automobile manufacturing, to restore profitability.

Worse still, solutions to climate change favoured by the current system actually worsen ecological degradation in many cases. Nuclear technology is, at best, expensive and inefficient and, at worst, dangerous, as the ongoing disaster at Fukushima reminds us. According to *Scientific American*, the cost of adding 100 new nuclear reactors in the United States, above that of renewable energy and energy conservation, is an astronomical US\$1.9 trillion to \$4.1 trillion. This is not to mention the billions needed in decommissioning costs for reactors and the containment of nuclear waste, as well as the fossil fuels burned in mining uranium.

The third reason capitalism is responsible for the crisis is overproduction. Capitalism is an unplanned system of competition between rival capitals. Instead of so-

Fig. 5. Trends in World Fossil Fuel Consumption

(Million tons oil equivalent)



Source: Environment Agency's "White Paper on the Environment" (1998)





Protesters in Bluff oppose off-shore oil-drilling. Photo by Joel Ryan.

*Jonathan Neale in his book **Stop Global Warming Change the World**, compares climate change with World War 2 to show how, to massively reduce emissions, industry could be restructured to switch production to renewable industries.*

called "market efficiency", the system is one of colossal, senseless waste and pollution. Food production and distribution methods ensure fully half of all food is wasted at various stages of production! Wasting even a quarter of global food produced means about 675 trillion litres of water are squandered, enough to provide the households of 9 billion people with 200 litres of water per day. This is even more disgusting when considering the fact that we live in a world where one in every 7 people go hungry, including 40 million in the United States itself.

Profit-driven international trade patterns are inherently wasteful. England in 1999 exported 111 million litres of milk and 47 million kilograms of butter, but in the same period imported 173 million litres of milk and 47 million kilograms of butter.

Individual solutions are no solution at all. Trying to get people to reduce their carbon footprint by using compact fluorescent lightbulbs, and reducing household energy consumption ignore the question of power. What is driving climate change? Earth Hour and other such events fail to address the true cause - industry and agriculture. In Australia, for example, only 7% of water is used by households, while 93% is

swallowed by intensive agriculture and industry.

Recycling (even when it is genuine and not a fraud) is part of an moralistic ideology that hides the waste produced by corporations.

## Solutions

Scientists are calling for a global reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by 90% by 2050 in order to avoid serious and irreversible climate change.

Jonathan Neale in his book *Stop Global Warming Change the World*, compares climate change with World War 2 to show how, to massively reduce emissions, industry could be restructured to switch production to renewable industries.

For example, in 1941 the US government adopted a virtual command economy in order to meet wartime needs. This was possible because all industries were organised by the state for war aims. Big car corporations were given "conversion orders" to switch production to manufacturing arms.

The government could also give "curtailment orders" to companies to reduce manufacturing if they exceeded demand. A war production board was established to co-ordinate the wartime

economy. If companies were inefficient in the way they used materials, the board could simply move production elsewhere.

Of course, wartime governments are especially undemocratic, as governments coerce people to sacrifice and die for the "national interest". The defence of the earth, by contrast, demands the most thoroughgoing, democratic dictatorship to smash the powerful vested interests of the capitalist minority.

If the same level of mobilisation was utilised now, to radically reorient production, it would be possible for millions of trams and electric trains to be produced in car factories, replacing the need for individual cars. Arms manufacture could be given over to producing wind turbines. Research funds could pour into solar and wave energy technology. This could eliminate unemployment, too, giving the lie to the idea we have to choose between workers' rights and the environment.

In the short term, we should campaign for concessions such as free public transport for all, to remove as many cars from the road as possible. We should demand the re-nationalization of the rail system and its expansion. Light rail systems are essential, especially in Auckland, a city built for the car.



# In Labor's Cause

## Essays on the American labour movement

David Brody is an emeritus professor of history at the University of California-Davis and a unionist. *In Labor's Cause* is a series of essays on the American working class published at various stages in his illustrious academic career. Reviewed by Harry Johnson.

Some essays seem more American than others: in particular the short but skilful narrative history of the coal mining unions and the essay that explains why the American industrial labour movement did not produce its own political party, as the union movement did in almost every other western country. But even these accounts provide interesting perspectives on core labour issues that are important everywhere.

Two of Brody's other essays illustrate the last point at least equally well: his history of the 10-hour day and his discussion of workplace contractualism. These essays appropriately acknowledge their debts to two of the greatest labour writers, E. P. Thompson and Harry Braverman.

The first of the two essays, 'Time and

Work During Early American Industrialism', describes the evolution of work time from the pre-industrial traditions that came to America from Britain and Europe to the recognisably modern form that includes the direct commercial exchange of numbered work hours at a specific hourly rate. Using extraordinarily rich colonial sources, Brody describes in sympathetic social and industrial detail the development of a workers' voice for their 'own Time' and their recognition, with the journeymen carpenters in the vanguard, of the exploitation by their masters of the daily rate, and thus their demand for a regular payment for a standard 10-hour day.

By comparison, New Zealand's written history of the 8-hour day, which might be as much myth as fact, is banal. This struggle over time has a universal character. It serves as a reminder that reducing working hours should still be an immediate industrial priority.

The second of the two essays is on 'Workplace Contractualism', a concept that derives from the "New Deal" in the USA in the 1930s. Contractualism is more easily understood as workers' rights on the shop floor, defined through

collective bargaining and legally enforceable, ultimately through arbitration.

The purpose of the essay is to examine the emergence of contractualism in USA in the context of the transformative impact of the Great Depression, its roots in the Declaration of Independence, the American mass production industrial sector, the New Deal legislation, and some surprising decisions by the US courts.

He compares the American experience with that of the Europeans, Britain, Japan, and Australia.

Brody includes a survey of unfavourable critiques of the workplace contractualism experience but concludes with a telling anecdote, which shows how there can still be advantages for workers even within such a constrained system.

Brody offers considerable fuel for that perennial union debate over the relative merits of unions acting within the law and outside the law.

*In Labor's Cause* is available through interloan or directly from the libraries of Auckland and Otago Universities.

At the same time, we need to build a fighting movement against both the large corporations who profit from the extraction of oil and coal, and to challenge capitalism itself in its inherent exploitation of humans and the natural world.

*Scientific American* has stated that it is possible for all energy in the world to come from renewable sources by as early as 2030. We should advocate for the implementation of solar, wind, tidal and geothermal energy as a far more

efficient, effective and cheaper option than coal oil and nuclear power. We should oppose all attempts to build coal plants, oil rigs and other polluting power generators.

But we need anti-capitalist politics. We need a system that actively synchronizes ecological sustainability and human wants and needs.

We can reduce carbon emissions to zero, and actively rejuvenate oceans, forests and top soil. Solar, wind and geothermal energy can easily meet the

needs of all. Resource use can drop dramatically if we adopt human need as the basis of economics, rather than profit.

Also because the system is based on human need not profit in the form of the use value of products not the exchange value will ensure that products are made to last long periods of time without planned obsolescence.

These may seem like utopian claims. But the alternative – another century of capitalism – is a guaranteed dystopia.



# Pacific Islanders seek sanctuary



## as climate change floods their land

Last November, the High Court rejected Ioane Teitiota, of Kiribati, for refugee status. Had he succeeded Mr Teitiota would have been the world's first official climate change refugee.

Mr Teitiota left South Tarawa, Kiribati, in 2007, as life there was becoming increasingly insecure. His three children were born here but none of them have permanent residence or citizenship. Faced with deportation, Teitiota argued climate change meant he and his family would suffer serious hardship if they were forced to return.

The Court accepted that Kiribati is suffering the effects of climate change, including storm surges, extremely high spring tides, contamination of drinking water by saltwater, and ground water with sewerage, flooding, shrinking arable land and fish stocks, overcrowding and worsening health. However it

did said Teitiota was a not refugee under domestic and international law because he hadn't been singled out for persecution in Kiribati. The difficulties he would face in Kiribati were no different from any other I-Kiribati.

In Bouganville, Papua New Guinea, the Carteret Islands are at risk of complete inundation, as sea levels have risen 10cm in the past 20 years. Carteret Islanders are suffering from severe food shortages as crops fail due to the salt contamination of the soil.

Small Pacific nations are highly vulnerable to sinking below the sea level a wholesale exodus of nations may be necessary.

But our government has refused to accept people displaced by climate change because they don't meet the legal definition of a refugee. All this shows is that the existing international

conventions are inadequate to provide justice to those whose homes and lands are laid waste by unchecked industrialisation.

In a globalised economy, capital (and the super-rich) moves freely across borders but people cannot. Australia and New Zealand firms and farms use workers from the Pacific when they need them, and deport them when they don't. This means the businesses avoid paying for the health, welfare and education of Pacific societies. Our bosses claim they are doing these people a favour because NZ wages are worth a fortune in the islands. In reality, they are making sure the islands are permanently poor. NZ industry exploits Pacific workers and contributes to climate change that destroys their homes. Working people here should make sure our brothers and sisters are safe. Open the borders!

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